westwords

Westwords

Volume 6 Number 1

Fall 1963

A quarterly of student writing published
by Mount St. Mary's College
Los Angeles, California

Editors: Camille Esselle
T. Jeanette Kroger

Assistant Editors: Olivia Grieco
Virginia Speltz

Guest Artist: Tom LaBouff

Staff:

Judy Harris
Judy Krommer
Helen Jaskoski
Peg Langhans
Marian Menges
Diane Nelson

Business:

Agnes Armitage
Julie Buswell
Kitty Carton
Michael McIntyre

Advisor: Sister M. Laurentia, C.S.J.

Archives
MSMC

The Orange Spot

An orange spot floats. It brightens slate once in space. The grey space that was quiet has life. Writers at the Mount try to find this orange spot—the point that gives tension and meaning to the fallow grey of experience.

Guest artist Tom LaBouff has created this cover for Westwords. One bright spot vivifies the grey—a writer's perception gives order to experience. The floating spot comes to rest in Westwords.

And recognition has come. In The Atlantic national contest the Mount has first for the fourth time; Dr. Pereyra, as student here, won first in poetry as did Judy Krommer; Claudette Drennan first in essay; now Pat Smith has another first essay: "Parallels in Poetry and Stone" $100. Helen Jaskoski second for poem "The Red Tide"; Judy Krommer fifth for poem "A Feeling." This is the third time Judy has ranked among the first five young poets in the country. Honors also to Jane Luecke "If It Weren't for the Sugar I've Been Cravin'" and Marianne Stanley "Significance of things French in Vanity Fair"; Merits to Marian Menges "A New Flame," and Carolyn Dennis "Judas or Christ."

Cabrini Literary Guild gave fourteen of their eighteen awards to the Mount: Stories—Peg Langhans "He Sends Me Postcards" first $200; Eileen Miller "There Now You Have a Friend" second $100; Michelle Lundborg "Floppy Yellow Chyrsanthemums" third $50; honors to Vickie Branch "The Night of the Barker"; Jane Luecke "If It Weren't for the Sugar I've Been Cravin'"; Marianne Stanley "Thank You Kimi-San." Poetry: Judy Krommer "The Good Friday" first $150; Marian Menges "Saul" $100; Helen Jaskoski "The Boy Who Forgot To Put Things Away" third $50; Honors Marian Menges "In a Greek Theater." Articles: Marian Menges "A New Flame" first $200; Helen Jaskoski "Existentialism in The Portrait of a Lady" second $100; Honors: Janet Hebert "The Circus in Hard Times"; Rosemary Mosellie "Doubt and Faith in Dostoyevsky." Some of these have appeared in Westwords, others are in this issue. Congratulations to our student writers.

Contents

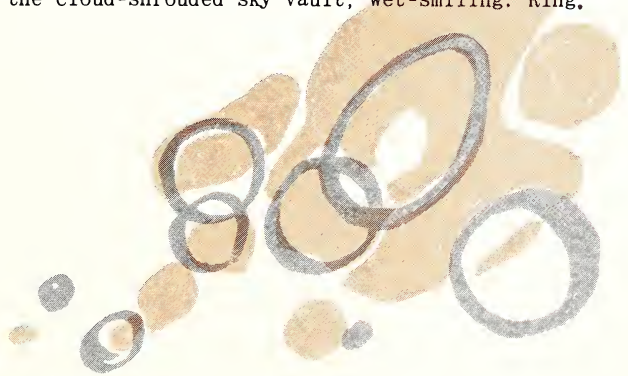
Rain Dance	3	T. Jeanette Kroger
Limbo Fruit	4	Vicki Branch
Mother and Child	10	Jane Luecke
The Slanted Mirror	11	Olivia Grieco
In Southern California	11	Philip Barnett
The Circus in Hard Times	12	Janet Hebert
Adolescence	16	Virginia Speltz
A Child's Poem	17	Virginia Speltz
A Bear	17	Pat Kirk
The Cherry Tree	18	T. Jeanette Kroger
Floppy Yellow Chrysanthemums	20	Michelle Lundborg
Bartender's Ballad	23	Vicki Branch
Grandmother	24	Virginia Speltz
Saturday	25	Pat O'Gara
The Empty Lot in the Middle of Town	27	Sister Marie Margaret, CSJ
Limerick	28	Julie Psomas
Limerick	28	Jeanne Schanhaar
Dancer, by Lipchitz	29	Camille Esselle
The Moles	31	Virginia Speltz
Four Loons and a Dozen Calla Lilies	32	Olivia Grieco
Perspective	36	Jane Luecke

Rain Dance

T. Jeanette Kroger

That which is sought defies the very seeking
wherein you walk, gold-dusted at the heels.
The rainbow beckons, laughing-quick, and peeking

through silken layers, fleeing, steals
the sleep from haunted restless eyes. Run
down the valleys of the moon. Slide
on the star-stream, whirled, and spun
in the cotton mist, leap on the sun. Ride
the blazing wind, dance in the coppery light
sparkling the face of the ladle God hung
in the heavens to speckle the sand of earth in spite
of the sun. Soon you will lift your canticle sung
for gentleness poured on withering brown. Sing
to the cloud-shrouded sky vault, wet-smiling. Ring.



Limbo Fruit

Vicki Branch

The wicker basket of fruit stood wearily in the center of the wrought iron patio table. Beyond the glass walls steamed heavy Jamaican sunlight, but the rattan drapes were still pulled so that the sunlight would not overripen the fruit.

"Denise! Yoo Hoo! Den-eez!"

"In here," she said softly and counted the fruit. There were three mangoes, two papayas, and four browning bananas.

"Denise, why didn't you answer me, dear? I called and called. I'm motoring into Kingston this afternoon with Ralph and Linda, and I wanted to know if you.... Why, Denise, I thought you were working. Where...where is your typewriter?"

"Over there." Denise nodded toward the door, and the woman looked down at the closed green case in surprise.

"Is there something wrong with it? Shall I take it into Kingston with us and have Harry have a look at it?"

"No. It's all right, Mrs. Longshaw. It's just too hot up here today. I can't think."

"No?" She looked at Denise and down at the white linen of her own dress. She could feel the dampness under her arms. "Dear, why don't you get dressed and come down to Kingston with us. We're going to spend the night—maybe even the weekend because Linda has a friend coming in on the Santa Rosa tomorrow. I think you'd like her."

"Thank you, but I'd rather not." Mrs. Longshaw raised her colorless eyebrows, and Denise added, "It's even hotter down there, isn't it?"

"Yes, usually."

"Then I think I'd rather stay here and wait for a breeze."

"Well, whatever you like, Denise. I promised Mr. Shannon I'd take good care of you; I just thought the drive would do you good."

"When do you think this heat wave will end?"

"I'm sure I don't know, dear."

"But you live here."

"I'm sorry, Denise, This is unusual for up here, really. I can't remember when it was like this before...ever."

Denise stood up. She was wearing a yellow bathing suit that heightened her tan, and the contrast of the brown of her skin and the yellow of the suit was as vivid as that of the streaked bananas in the basket. "I guess I'll sit in the shade for awhile," she said. "Thank you for asking me, but I just might get an idea, and I'd hate to be so far from my typewriter all weekend. You did say you'd be gone for the weekend?"

"I think we shall. Perhaps you'll be able to concentrate better with us gone, dear. I was only worried that you'd given up with the machine all packed away."

Denise laughed a little. "No. It's sort of psychology. Whenever I have lots of time to write, nothing comes. But if I think I can't, if I'm busy or there is no paper or typewriter, then suddenly I get the urge. I'm funny that way. I thought if I hid the typewriter from myself and pretended that I didn't have it, all of a sudden I'd want to write again."

Mrs. Longshaw looked relieved. "I guess you know yourself, dear. I wouldn't spoil your little plan for the world. Mr. Shannon would be so disappointed if you left here without writing anything, you know."

"Yes."

"How nice that you realize that, dear. I won't bother you any more. Ralph warned me not to. He said that writers have to be left alone and they'll produce in their own good time; but here it's been three weeks—but that's none of my business, is it? I'm not worried any more, Denise. Is there anything you want in Kingston, before I forget?"

"No, thank you."

"All right, dear. Have a nice weekend; get lots done. We'll telly you if we decide to come back up before Sunday noon. Good bye."

"Good bye."

Denise watched the white linen dress disappear down the dark hall, and she could taste the lavender cologne in the air as she closed the door. The scent permeated the house even in the daytime and hung in invisible clouds on the terrace in the evenings, just as it had at the Higgins', the Chengs', the Ayoubs', Even Brian Shannon smelled of suffocating lavender, though he was a good agent.

Denise smiled and pulled open the drapes. Beneath her window

was a neat brick walk, flanked by zinnias and oleander which disappeared into a forest of jacarandas and poincianas. Denise knew that beneath the trees, the hillside sloped sharply down the ten miles to the ocean. She could see the green water on the horizon and Great Pedro Bluff to the West, and then the vague curve toward Portland Point in the East.

Brian always managed to find her a beautiful spot, whether in Cornwall, Hong Kong, or Jamaica, but then he would spoil it as he carried in the typewriter. "Here it is, Denise," he would say, and unbutton his tweeds or his whites, depending on which part of the Commonwealth they had chosen. "I'll put the typewriter up here by the window. That view should inspire you. You don't have to write me any letters, my dear. Just write me a good book or a play. That's all I ask. Hmmm?" He would bend and kiss her cheek, and Denise would hold her breath to avoid the lavender that in the humid air was like rotting fruit.

"I'll call you in a month, my dear," he would conclude, and then he would be gone, leaving her with this or that "charming couple," who were usually rediscovered classmates from Eton or Oxford. Denise noticed that the men rarely remembered Brian, but the wives were "positively thrilled" to have the authoress of Egrep's Orchard in their homes. Brian had explained it: "This is very profitable for everyone concerned, Denise. You're not imposing; you are a very welcome guest. All you have to do is write."

"That's all," she said aloud and opened the sliding glass door. She stood on the walk waiting for the usual breeze, but there was none. Only the juice of the broken ice plant stems cooled her feet against the hot bricks. From the drive on the other side of the house, she could hear Mrs. Longshaw talking to the Negro houseboy, Teach, named for the famous pirate Blackbeard.

"I'm leaving Miss Denise in charge, Teach. I know you'll keep things in order for her."

Denise couldn't hear Teach's reply because Ralph had started the Hillman, and by the time she had rounded the house, the cream-colored car was bouncing down the road to May Pen and Kingston nearly fifty miles away. Teach was swinging loosely down the path toward the house. He stopped to pick a red hibiscus and threw it into the air, leaping up with it and bending to catch it just before it touched the bricks. Denise smiled.

She wanted to follow him, to watch him dance at the local Bamboche Saturday night, to describe what she saw on the ream of bond in her room.

Someone blew on a conch shell from below the jacarandas, and she heard laughter and then the pinging of silver spoons against Spode. Was it time for tea already?

She returned to the house and made herself a daiquiri. The terrace was quiet and it seemed cooler without the Longshaws sweating in the wrought iron chairs. She carried her drink into the palm shade and closed her eyes until she noticed a shadow darken the orange screen of her eyelids. "What is it, Teach?"

"Tea, Miz Daneez."

"No, thank you, Teach. I don't really care for tea."

"No tea?"

"That's right, Teach. Thank you, anyway."

He made a graceful little bow and loped away, first muttering and then singing, "Miz Daneez don' wan' no tea, whoa—oh, no—oh. Miz Daneez don' wan' no tea...."

Denise smiled and closed her eyes again. The shaved ice was melting in her drink, but she didn't notice it. She was listening to the bent palm fronds above her. They were rustling and flapping.

"Look like de Trade Win' is gwine ta blow," said Teach, reappearing on the patio with a tablecloth under his arm. "Where would you like dinnah, Miz Daneez?"

"Out here is all right. The breeze feels so good."

The sun set quickly, and Teach lit the hurricane lamps. Denise sipped a second daiquiri and waited for Teach to announce dinner. In the distance there was the sound of screeching tires and a bleating horn—one of the native drivers on his Friday night spree, Denise supposed.

"Dinnah, Miz Daneez."

She stood beside the table for a moment before sitting at the place set for her. She had never noticed what a large table it was. With her fork she poked at a little brown ball on her plate. "What is this, Teach?"

He leaned forward from where he had been standing against the white stucco. "That's codfish frittah with b'iled bananas, Miz."

"Oh." After a few bites, she asked, "Is this a native dish, Teach?"

"Yes, Miz."

"Does it have a name?"

"You gwine ta write 'bout it?"

She lifted her head, flattered. "I might. Does it have a name?"

"We call it 'Stamp and Go,' Miz," answered Teach, but Denise could see that he was smiling.

He was still looking at her and smiling as she put her fork and knife across her plate. Without a word he took the plate and returned with a dessert of Bombay mango swimming in coconut cream.

"This is delicious, Teach."

He continued smiling. "You gwine ta write all 'bout mangoes, too?"

"Just what do you mean by that!"

"Nothin', Miz." Teach dropped the smile as he poured her coffee.

"Teach, I want to know why you said that."

He rolled his eyes and backed away. "I didn't mean nothin', Miz Daneez. I only work here."

Denise frowned and finished the fruit in silence. Teach stood by the hurricane lamps, watching the wind-stunted flames. "I think I'll go inside now, Teach. Will you help me lift my typewriter onto the table."

Teach turned down the wicks and followed her inside, but not before Denise thought she saw his teeth again in the quick darkness.

He left her alone, and Denise sat running her fingertips along the cold keys. Beyond the glass pane, the patio was now invisible in the dark Caribbean night. There was no moon. Denise chewed at her lip: it was a perfect night for the crocodile hunts up on the Black River or for the dancing ghosts in the ruins of Rose Hall. She fingered the keys thoughtfully, but the sheet of paper remained blank—like the endlessly glaring white sand at Montego Bay, she thought. If only she could cover her paper with black figures as the beach was crowded with black and brown-skinned Limbo dancers and tourists. She extended her arms and admired her own tan. "Brown as a banana," she thought and typed the words so that Teach would hear that she was working; but she didn't like what she had written. She wished Mrs. Longshaw wouldn't keep filling the basket with bananas when no one ate them.

Teach stood in the doorway. "Telephone, Miz Daneez."

She followed him into the library and took the receiver. "Yes?"

"Denise, dear. How are you doing?"

"Everything's fine, Mrs. Longshaw."

"Has it cooled off up there?"

"Yes. There's a wind."

"It's just beastly down here. Ralph and I were wondering—would you mind too terribly if we returned tomorrow—are you busy, working on something?"

"Mrs. Longshaw, this is your house."

"We don't want to bother you if you are busy."

"It's all right."

"Linda will stay down here till Sunday; but Ralph and I—we can't bear this heat. You don't mind?"

"Of course not."

"Then we'll see you before noon tomorrow, dear. Yes?"

"Yes."

Denise returned to the table and fastened the lid onto the typewriter. She carried it to the cabinet behind the chaise lounge and shut it inside. Then she peeled one of the bananas. As her teeth sank into the soft fruit, she held her breath against the smell of lavender.

Mother and Child

Fence driven to earth

Shielding to shelter

Tender shoots shallow rooted

Quivering to cling

To the solid stake.

Jane Luecke

The Slanted Mirror

Olivia Grieco

There's slanted safety in a slanted mirror
no judgment on the other side,
no rumored message for an unseen hearer.
Simple image meets simple eye
darkened by a single fear—
the mirror slants a different trace
than lights the mask that lookers wear.

In Southern California

Philip Barnett

WINTER sneaks
snoops
then softly
springs in

The Circus in Hard Times

The ringmaster enters the center ring, cracks his whip, and the show begins. Around him, in all three rings revolve the fantasy, delight and excitement that have been associated with the circus for years. The ringmaster is Charles Dickens and the name of the circus is *Hard Times* (London, 1907), a name that describes it well since it is not a cheerful novel. However the circus is a vital part of it. Corresponding to the three rings under the big-top are three instances when the circus comes into the *Hard Times* universe, and shows us how the circus, representing fantasy, is a natural need; how it may represent the perfect society; and finally, how this fantasy can come into anyone's life and really is a vital part of life itself.

The circus represents life, truly lived and not just endured. The people in it are spontaneous and have a highly developed skill and deftness that bring poise, pride, confidence and ease. They are buoyant people, like tumblers or ballet dancers, floating above the heads of the rest of us, left with both feet on the ground. They are fairy-like, live in a land of make-believe and use their imaginations to the utmost, devising new acts and trying to amuse the public in any novel way they can.

We get our first glimpse of the carnival along with Tom and Louisa Gradgrind, whose father has raised them from infancy on Facts. He catches them gaping at the "trivialities" of the circus and is shocked. He cannot believe "his own metallurgical Louisa...and his own mathematical Thomas" (p. 22), capable of such an act. When asked why they did it, Louisa answers, "Wanted to see what it was like" (p. 22). Upon further questioning, Mr. Gradgrind discovers for the first time that Facts are not sufficient for the raising of children. Louisa says that she is "tired of everything" (p. 23).

Mrs. Gradgrind, too, cannot understand why the children feel a need for something outside of Facts. "Look at the shells and minerals and things...instead of circuses...What could you possibly want to know about circuses?" (p. 27) Mrs. Gradgrind is a woman with no "nonsense" about her and as free from "any alloy of the nature fancy as any human being not arrived at the perfection of being an absolute idiot, ever was"(p. 27). She has

never had enough imagination to find the need for make-believe that her children have felt.

Mr. Bounderby is as close a friend of Mr. Gradgrind as is possible for two people with no interest in humanity. He tells Mr. Gradgrind that the reason this fantasy has been discovered in the children is not because they have idle imaginations, but because of Sissy Jupe, who attends Gradgrind's school and whose father works for Sleary's Horse-Riding Circus.

So, Bounderby and Gradgrind return to the circus to inform Sissy's father that she is a bad influence. This is our second look at the circus. It is not the circus itself we see at this time, however. It is the people and the way they live that interests us. The pub where they stay is loud and alive, as compared to Gradgrind's colorless square vault of a school where facts are poured into passive children; his home, Stone Lodge, where love is unknown, is cold by comparison; and the blackish-red factories of Coketown look like fairy-palaces only at night when they are brightly lighted but there is no one inside. When the realities of day come, they are once more merely places for the hands to work with no opportunities to use their imaginations. The circus, on the contrary, is alive when there are people in it; after they have moved on to another town, their tents look like skeletons.

Mr. Gradgrind does not find Signor Jupe in, and guesses that he has departed because he fears he is losing his sense of timing and ability to amuse people any more. So, in order not to be a burden to Sissy or to disgrace her, he has gone off. When Gradgrind tells the circus people that Jupe has deserted Sissy, these people who "cared so little for plain Facts" (p. 45), practically throw him out for his crudeness, which he cannot understand.

Now, our attention is turned to these people. They are vibrant, quick-moving, and very much alive. "There is a remarkable gentleness and childishness about these people, a special inaptitude for any kind of sharp practice, and an untiring readiness to help and pity one another" (p. 47). They have a sense of community-feeling about them—they are interested in each other in a manner that is at the same time personal and impersonal. The individual is defined by his cooperative role and must submit to the common goal or activity of the whole—the circus act. There is a feeling of camaraderie, a spirit of

one for all. They are constantly creative. Furthermore, they have a strong family sense and realize that it is at the basis of a strong society.

> The father of one of the families was in the habit of balancing the father of another of the families on the top of a great pole; the father of a third family often made a pyramid of both these fathers (p. 43).

So, through the "goodness of his heart", Mr. Gradgrind permits Sissy to continue at his school and wait for the return of her father. But, poor Sissy, who has lived all her life with fairies, goblins, and a sense of others never does learn the Gradgrind Facts well enough to fit into and become a part of Stone Lodge. Although she has lived all her life around horses, she cannot give a definition of a horse. She sees too much and cannot limit herself to the matter-of-factness of Gradgrind's existence. He is too rigidly encased in himself to understand what she means. She thinks that the first principle of Political Economy is "Do unto others" (p. 64). She cannot understand how a country can be prosperous until its wealth is equally distributed. And, finally, she does not want to think about statistics when people and lives are involved. She has mastered the system of forgetting herself and living entirely for and in others. She has learned this while living with the circus and cannot ever forget it. She has facts, but they are not hard facts like Mr. Gradgrind expects. Hers are light and full of air and life.

At the end of the book, Mr. Gradgrind finds himself at the circus for the third and last time. His son, Tom, has robbed a bank, and at the suggestion of the "good fairy", Sissy, has run away to Sleary's Circus for cover and protection. The analogy is clear. In Gradgrind's life there was no place for a circus. But in time of need, Tom ran there for protection, rather than to his own home. Gradgrind is surprised when he arrives at the circus and finds Tom in the center ring, dressed as a clown, black-face and all. However, Mr. Gradgrind is relieved and airs his philosophy that "gratitude was to be abolished" (p. 286), because after all, heaven was "a political-economic place, and if it wasn't, we had no business there" (p. 286).

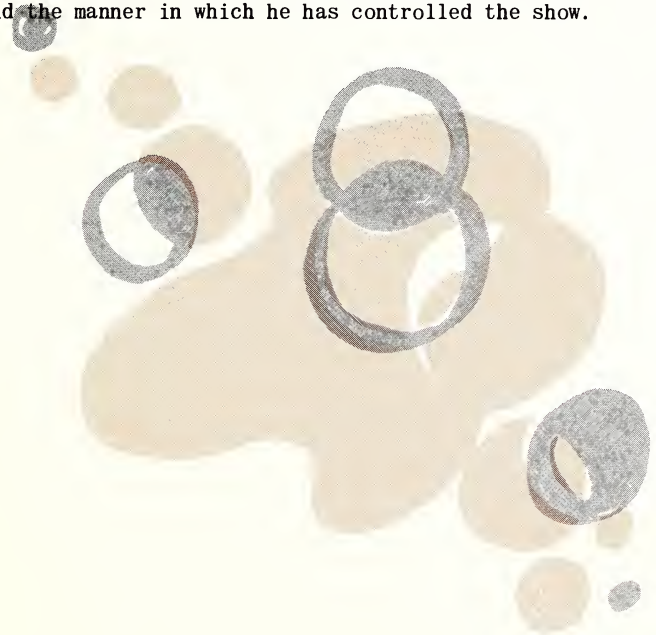
He tries to pay Mr. Sleary for all his troubles, but

Mr. Sleary refuses money for himself, but does let Gradgrind purchase a few necessities for himself and his friends, such as a dog collar, brandy and a bell for the horse. Then, he takes an opportunity to voice his philosophy—quite different from Mr. Gradgrind's. "There ith a love in the world, not all Thelf-interetht after all, but thomething very different" (p. 290). This is reminiscent of one of his early opinions, "People must be amuthed, thomehow, they can't be alwayth working, nor yet they can't be alwayth a learning"(p. 49).

These circus people have devoted their entire lives to amusement and Gradgrind has devoted his to learning. Gradgrind, for all his learning, has not yet come to the realization that there must be a combination of the two and that an excess of either is wrong.

The circus finally entered Gradgrind's life. Even he, with all the Facts known to modern man at his fingertips, could not live indefinitely without it.

The circus is over now, ending with a feeling of warmth, lightness, vitality—and a great admiration for the ringmaster and the manner in which he has controlled the show.



Adolescence

He finds the bottom step with awkward seeking
and waits until the cloud lifts. He tells them he's
coming now, but the sidewalk is swelling
and the dark sun blows his face down. His pleas
melt in dollar words because he stammers
with a voice that changes. The puddled places
wet his soles and soak his backyard manners.
His only time is subway time that races
against the frontyard faces who stare
away his Gulliver days. He hides
beneath the street light and shadow where
the night lets the sun come. Then he rides
through the cloud to the second step. His eyes
lift his face upward and the darkness dies.

Virginia Speltz

A Child's Poem

Come to my pineapple pantry
There's pudding—enough on a spoon
Apples and marshmallow candy
Donuts fresh-dunked before noon

Be careful my mother's a bother
She cleans when the popsicle drips
If you want a cinnamon cracker
Finish the chocolate chips

Virginia Speltz

A Bear

Yesterday I stooped to see
Two eyes peering out at me.

Under the leaf and down side up
on the stem he'd stopped to sup.

Black and orange with prickly hair
He's what's called a wooly bear.

I touched him gently, "Oops, he'll fall."
Plop in my hand, a furry ball.

Pat Kirk

The Cherry Tree

We had a cherry tree.

When I was young,
The cherries tasted good
In summer.
    Jamie and I plucked
    Those on the lowest branches
    With grubby, stubby fingers,
    Popping them in our mouths
    Three at a time, and the
    Juice, sticky, sweet, black-red,
    Spilled
            down our chins.
    They tasted awful good.

    And when I grew older,
    The cherry tree was a white
    Springtime blossom
        Sprinkled with splashes of scarlet,
        That Jamie reached up to pluck
        From an elbow-bent branch,
        And as his 17-year-old face reddened
        To match the blossom-speckles,
        Handed it to me. I reached for it, it
        Dropped,
                and we stopped, knocked our heads,
        And understood why the blossoms were lovely.

When we married,
The cherry tree was fruit,
Ripening into autumn.
    As when fruit mellows to wine,
    Our love mellowed, deepened,
    Flowered in children.
    Jamie and I were one sturdy tree,
    Our children fruit that,
    Ripened, parted from our branches and
    Fell,
          taking root in time,
    Blossoming in the sunshine.

    And now, alone,
    The cherry tree is bare
    Of leaves in wintertime.
        Jamie is gone some two years.
        The pace of my life has settled
        To an older gait, and
        The half of me remaining is full
        With memories of a cherry tree
        In summer, spring, and fall, that
        Grew,
              from a pale green stalk
        To fruit and flowers, and withered leaves

    Waiting for the cherries.

T. Jeanette Kroger

Third Cabrini $50

Floppy Yellow Chrysanthemums

Michelle Lundborg

Pops and I, we've traveled around together for fifteen years. I was five when that part of my life started, and before I was twelve years old, I had smelled the smell of about seventy-five train stations, and heard the sounds of at least thirty bus depots. Pops and I, we saw a lot together.

Pops, he plays alto sax. Not only does he play, man, he blows. He wails. He communicates. I think so. Pops' group thinks so. Pops knows so. He used to say that like the hammer was made for John Henry's hands, the alto sax, it was made for his hands, Lyle Moore's hands. That's my Pops.

Pops' group traveled around with us. There were five of them, counting Pops. There was Louis on the keys, Miles on the drums, Scooter on the bass, and Joey, he played trumpet and sometimes the vibes. They all had known Pops and each other since they were boys in Chicago. Pops used to tell me how he started blowin' on a stick with holes in it, 'cause they didn't have enough money for beans, much less a horn. And Louis, he learned piano on table tops and stair steps. Miles, he got thrown out of PS 108 for pounding on the desk top during arithmetic. Miles, he says that teacher just didn't swing. Me, I've never been to school.

Pops, well, he's my Pop; and the group, they were my mother, my teachers, my friends, my family. I was part of a whole; I belonged; werwere close to one another. Close as only coloreds in jazz can be close. Man, the group would play, and I would listen, and man, we would converse. No words, no gestures, just sounds. Cool sounds. Louis, he made love to his piano—he created dreams and pictures the whole group felt and understood. Miles, he told us all about life: our lives, his life; anybody's life with the music he found in his drums. All the group—all of them created something, talked about something, prayed about something every time they all sat down together.

But to me, Pops was the greatest. Pops talked just the way he played. Just like he could make that sax throb, he could create a picture, a world with a sentence or two. Once, when I had

awakened after a dream, frightened of the dark, he told me that night was nothin' but an old darkie mammy sorrowin' after a dead child. I wasn't ever frightened of the darkness after that. Lightnin' neither. Pops said the big old sky only used lightnin' to try to talk jazz to the dark old clouds. Pops, he was a dreamer. He and I, we were two of a kind. He knew me through and through.

After lots of traveling around, so many times I'd be cranky and tired and lonely and unhappy. And Pops, you know what he'd do? He'd take me to a flower shop, sometimes it'd be in Jacksonville, sometimes in Montgomery, and he'd buy me a big bunch of floppy yellow chrysanthemums. Somehow, those big shaggy blossoms made me feel a part of things again, and if Pops thought I was beginning to get more like myself, he'd sit me down with the flowers, take the sax, and just blow for a while. Pops could make that horn throb.

By the time I was twelve years old, thirteen maybe, Pops knew, the group knew, that Pops had plans for me. Louis told me a long time ago that Pops had told him he had big ideas for any kid of his. No matter if she was a girl, Pops said, he wanted his kid to blow, just like him. Louis said that meant more than anything to Pops—to have his kid in jazz. So, be it sax, clarinet, drums, piano—it made no difference. Pops had a career lined up for me.

But me, much as I felt a part of jazz, and swing, and the blues, I didn't want no part of playin'. Man, I was a listener. I could spot a F major chord with ear muffs on. I could tell which colored fella was blowin' after the first five sounds, but I didn't want to play. I didn't want to play at all. I didn't know why then. I don't know why now, I just knew that I didn't want to play.

Pops, he'd try to help me, try to make me sit down and practice at somethin', but I kept puttin' him off, tellin' him, "No, Pops. Honest. It ain't for me." But Pops, he never really believed what I said.

We were in Savannah the night everything sort of exploded and fell together. Pops, he blew that horn like he never did before that night. The rest of the group too. I could tell the group really had somethin' to say that night. The colored folks

in the audience didn't need no kickin' girls and shinin' costumes to fall into a mood. Pops and the group—they just played. Those notes were tellin' stories and makin' poems that night. I saw all the closed eyes in the audience, all the swayin' of heads. Those folks, they were seein' and feelin' melancholy and bitterness and exhaustion. Pops, he could really communicate with colored folks.

After that night, after the smoke had cleared and the chairs were all piled up on top of the tables like erector sets, Pops, he sat me down.

"Sarie," he said, "tonight those people and I talked to one another. I told them things about themselves they never knew before. I made dreams tonight, Sarie. I made those folks feel."

"Yes, Pops," I said.

"Sarie, honey, don' you want that for yourself? Don' you?"

"Pops," I said, "I'm Sarie. I ain't no boy, I ain't no blower. Pops, I'm one of those folks out there listenin'; tellin' you with my eyes that you're makin' sense with your horn. You understand that, Pops? Do you, Pops?"

Pops just sat there. He looked sad, very sad. He got up and I saw the worn spots in his jacket, the sweat on his shirt collar.

"Pops," I said.

He didn't answer me. He just walked sort of slow like out of the place, takin' the sax with him.

I cried for awhile right in the middle of all those erector sets. I must have fallen asleep for a few minutes, because when I got up to leave there was a funny taste in my mouth, and my eyes burned. I walked upstairs where we were stayin' and I opened the door and went right in to where my bed was. I must of known it all the time, because I wasn't even surprised when I found the big, floppy, shaggy yellow chrysanthemums on my pillow. Pops, he wasn't around. But I knew he was probably out somewhere, tellin' bedtime stories to the stars with his horn.

I put the mums in a glass near my bed. Floppy, shaggy chrysanthemums, and everything would be fine. Just fine.

Bartender's Ballad

"Bring one martini, if you please;
I doubt I'll wish for more.
At eight o'clock my date will come
And I must watch the door."

Open and shut, the door swung often,
Off and on, her cigarettes glowed,
In and out passed the Saturday lovers,
Nine-ten, my wrist-watch showed.

"Waiter," she signalled with her hand
As I was hurrying past.
"Have you the time?" "Nine-ten," I said.
"Oh, no. Your watch is fast!"

But she requested another drink,
And her ashes greyed the tray,
And still she sat at midnight
As I wiped the spills away.

"Get me another drink," she said.
(What was it?--three or four?)
"Just leave the bottle here," she said,
"I can pour."

Vicki Branch

Grandmother

She goes alone through summer dusk to where
the friends of silver sit on cold brown. Her
tight steps are sure enough because the bare
uncobbled path keeps time with the traveler.
Inside the doors she bends beside the pew
and warms the silent space with silk petal
print. She loosens pink lips to May hymns, new
to the child, still fresh in a tremor. Crystal
beads rest over soft hand-folds and a lace
piece. She goes alone through summer dusk, then
kneels until the blessing and leaving replace
red candlelight and singing with return.
The night wind thins her silk and silver;
She does not lean on it; it follows her.

Virginia Speltz

Saturday

Patricia O'Gara

Eucalyptus bark hung damp across bended branches. The morning sun on the other side of the tree made a shadow that fell a hundred feet down and stretched across the grass. One foot then another stepped into the dark grass and crunched the felled bark scattered near the bottom of the tree. It was Saturday, and I was ten.

The blades of grass bent easy under my bare feet and then yawned back into place as I lifted myself off the earth and up on a limb, and into the tree itself. Standing straight up, I stretched and climbed from branch to branch until I was alone with the swaying leaves. In and out I looked. Into and about I saw, the nests of hummingbirds and the shells of new blossoms. It was Saturday, and I was ten.

The sun fell warm on my face and melted the fog from the valley below. One seagull far away moved rolling wings to the sea. We shared the sea and valley where pirates hid among tall grasses burying treasure.

The tree and I moved in the wind, and I heard the sprinkler slip-splash water on the lawn. My fingers snapped the rubber-band on my pigtail and peeled bark from the tree while I watched the seagull move silently closer. In the next breeze, the seagull stopped, wings outstretched, stunned. Then, it began the spinning-gliding-falling drop to the sand at the edge of the valley below.

Swinging and sliding from branch to branch, I jumped knees and nose down into the bark and dry leaves at the bottom of the tree. I ran across the lawn stopping to bend and roll up the cuff of my jeans, glad I didn't have a dress on. I scrambled down the side of the hill leaving a path of broken blades of tall grass behind. The valley was deep and long to the sea and each bare foot stepped far into the grass crumbling leaves and getting poked and scratched by twigs hidden there. With giant steps I walked closer to the sand through the thinning tall grass to the marsh and across an isolated pool of sea water. The reflection of his yellow beak stretched out from his body along the far edge of the pool.

He was beautiful! and big! bigger than most seagulls were. The black edge of his wings drooped a little in the sand and a smear of blood stained the underside of his shoulder. He held his head up very tall and watched me so still as I came closer. Every ray of sun fell on him and me drying the sand below his webbed-feet. I knelt down next to him and put one hand around his body over his wings so he wouldn't fly away. With an old rag from my back pocket, I wiped the blood away. A few feathers had been knocked off leaving a small space where he had been hit by a rock. I put my free arm around his neck and held him there near his bill and lifted him standing myself up. Together we turned away from the sea to the goldly green hills. We moved back to the path of broken bended grass and up the hill to the edge of the lawn where I put him down and tied an old string from my back pocket around his neck.

No one was home to show my seagull to and so together, we walked, guards of a huge estate. For lunch we ate peanut butter sandwiches, and at three we had apples and ice cream. We walked, sometimes next to each other and sometimes a string away, over the fallen eucalyptus bark and watched the wet grass dry beneath the silent sprinkler.

The sun sharpened from blazing yellow into a flat circle of red as it passed into the returning fog. The sun folded up, the closer it drew to the sea. We stopped at the bottom of the tree, and I bent and lifted him and held him under one arm. Together we swung up and lifted ourselves into the tree and climbed higher and higher until the branches shook. We stopped, and I held him and loosened the string off, and while the setting sun fell warm on my face, the seagull moved rolling wings back to the sea. It was Saturday, and I was ten.

The Empty Lot in the Middle of Town

Some people take no time to see the sod
that holds them in their place. A special brand
of man was given task to tread and plod
the soil. A rocky, rough, toil-laden band
of land to still, subdue and pacify--
extending blue to gold, and brown to green.
With pick and hoe to sow the grain and try
to make of wilderness a golden scene
of rolling peace, a harvest and fulfill-
ment. Men build now, a steel frontier, to crowd
with loud and frantic sounds, the mill
and chill of men. Between the scrapers, found,
the sound of grass, long grown, alone; a row
as free as sea, to wave and spread and grow.

Sister Marie Margaret CSJ

Limerick

Julie Psomas

There once was a man climbed a roof
And thought he was now quite aloof.
But when he climbed down
Those standing around
Said, "You're more of a goof than aloof."

Limerick

Jeanne Schanbaar

My mother's sister is my Aunt Joan,
She choked to death on a turkey bone,
We all felt her loss,
Especially her boss,
Now we never eat turkey at home.

Dancer, by Lipchitz

Poise the clay in flight
And motion stops.
The dancer slowly drops,
Descends, limbs cease tight
Form, the moment ends.

Caught, she has been caught--
Dancer round arms circling, spin
Away, wheeling, leap again
That leap--but she cannot,
And quietly she bends.

But one who watches, leaps.
One who watches keeps
This bow for mastery in clay--
Knows she shall leap another day.

Camille Esselle

The Moles

Stars are the voices' echo
Through the bird quails
Into the oyster pearls.
Sea birds roll and die
While the stars blind the black wind.
Night crystals on a mint plant.
Moles part the deep earth
(Opening into zebras)
Wilting weeds ladder to the sky
As the moles race out in line
Marking the grass shadows;
And the stars are the voices' echo
Through the bird quails
Into the oyster pearls.

Virginia Speltz

Four Loons and a Dozen Calla Lilies

Olivia Grieco

High-pitched spiritual atmospheres have always been a source of constant fear to me. The smallest mistake, like setting down the ten foot kneeler on the fingers of some obnoxious child turned loose to crawl beneath the pews—well, it can raise a real uproar. Lenten seasons are prone to be particularly dangerous. The solemnity, while terrifically inspiring, simply invites disturbance.

About four years ago, during Holy Week, my family and I were the innocent objects of gross social ignominy on just such an occasion.

It was Good Friday and mother had worked all morning to muster up the proper attitude in all her children. We were not allowed to play the radio, tell jokes, make faces, or be in any way truly expressive. Anything that seemed potential laugh material was immediately discouraged by a stern downward glance and the hearty shake of a right index finger.

The exodus hour finally arrived and without a smile we all moved with appropriate slowness to the car and in a dignified manner proceeded to the church. Everything had gone smoothly so far, outside of a minor squabble with my younger brother Joe just as we reached the vestibule entrance.

"Joe, if you don't take that sailor cap off, I'll—I'll really get mad," my mother blustered. Joe stood quietly ignoring mother's close glare. Well all right, he'd take the cap off to go into church, but he'd put it right back on afterwards and wear it all night. Just wait and see! He didn't care if his ears did begin to stick out like Dopey, the ugliest of the seven dwarfs. Joe was thirteen and in the middle of a hat kick no one could quite explain. I didn't meddle, of course. No dignified lady of seventeen ever gets involved in such barbaric goings-on. I pretended not to be with them.

The next thing I knew, my six year old sister was blatantly announcing to the whole world, "Mommie, I haffa go't the bathroom," and simultaneously I was elected escort. Mother and Joey waited. We came hurrying back a few minutes later, holding our

hats on bravely against the wind and still minus a smile. I pulled Margie by the hand inside the church.

Well, there was mother whispering with the old Spanish lady who lived across the street from us.

"Oh, hello, Mrs. Garcia," I said, "How are you feeling?"

That was all I ever said to her. She replied in her perennially sad tone, tugging feebly at the end of her pink shawl, "Not too well today, honey." I said politely, "Oh, I'm sorry to hear that." It turned out to be not the most polite thing actually because she was uttering her sad reply at the same time that I was apologizing. Meanwhile the church was filling up and I tugged on mother's dress, an unmistakable signal to cut the conversation and get the show on the road.

Margie was getting restless and I could tell Joey was contemplating putting on his sailor cap.

Mrs. Garcia suddenly and unexpectedly turned to the lost and found table to her left and said she had almost forgotten why she had been waiting for us. "They're from our garden," she said and lifted from the table a dozen long stemmed calla lilies and handed them to Margie. The old woman smiled sweetly, patted Margie on the head and limped away.

"Mother," I whispered loudly, "what in the world are we going to do with those nutty flowers. Everyone'll think we're crazy or something."

"Hush," she said, "Margie can hold them under her coat. No one will notice. We can't just throw them away, she'll see."

I could feel my face reddening when someone tapped me on the shoulder from behind and whispered cheerily, "Hi, mind if I sit with you?" I turned to my dear, fat friend Gloria with a smile.

"Oh, oh sure. If you don't mind sitting with four loons and a dozen calla lilies."

"What?"

"Never mind."

Meanwhile mother had tucked the flowers under Margie's coat and buttoned it up (Margie complaining all the while that the stems were tickling her). Mother then straightened Margie's hat, as though that would make her look just perfect. It might even cover up the white growth lacing one side of her hem.

I sighed disgustedly; mother said, "Tch, tch, never you mind;" Margie giggled and Joe ran his fingers along the inside

of his cap. Gloria waddled after us into the church down the side aisle. A massive usher with a brown Teddy Roosevelt mustache pointed to an empty front row. Finally I relaxed. All our troubles were over. Things proceeded with inspiring efficiency—no disasters.

Two angelic-looking altar boys who threw rocks and broke our window last Halloween, brought the crucifix down to the communion rail. The usher pounced heavily down the aisle and genuflected beside our pew. I was preparing to rise, waiting for the mustached giant to give the signal. Mother was busily securing the calla lilies for the journey. Finally with a little confidence Goliath bent down to my level and whispered, "You hafta go down this aisle (he pointed to the back of the church) through the vestibule and down the center." He twisted his finger to illustrate.

Nodding obediently, I rose and started down the aisle. My party followed single file, mother nervously watching Margie's right hem. After Gloria had bulged out of the pew, the usher, realizing his error, quickly closed off the pew with his huge arm.

A peculiar feeling of loneliness crept over me, and I turned to see my party following close behind but no one else. We were the only people in the whole parish who appeared to be leaving the church.

My ear lobes pulsed with heat. All eyes were on us, as though we were a rare walking disease to be watched only from the corner of one's eye. I slowed up to wait for mother.

"What are we going to do?" I whispered frantically, almost tripping. She nudged me gently.

"Just keep walking."

We were half way down the aisle when I turned to see if my eyes hadn't deceived me. No, we were the only ones leaving the church. In the same instant, Margie's coat loosened, and one by one twelve calla lilies dropped to the holy floor. Joe, who had been following behind Margie, stopped as though contemplating what his next move would be. He bent down suddenly to gather the blooms and blocked fat Gloria's movement. Tumbling over him, she bounced face up, a gloriously fat cherub amid the lilies.

Impulsively, Joey tossed on his sailor cap, gathered the

flowers and weakly aided fat Gloria. Overnight he had become a nautical hero.

The long, horrendous walk was finally over, and we found ourselves back in the vestibule. We stood solemnly facing each other like Indians waiting for the pow-wow to begin. And then I began to laugh the terrible, uncontrollable spurting laugh that only comes in churches and libraries. It caught immediately and soon all five faces were red and shaking vigorously. Mother jerked both sides of her suit jacket down hoping to restore her dignity while Joe, irreligiously dumped the lilies back on the lost and found table.

Mother's face grew stern again, "We'll have none of this nonsense on Good Friday. Joey take that hat off and you all mind your manners and follow me." She pulled Margie in front of her, the rest of us followed behind. She led us into the crowd that now collected in the center aisle. We proceeded slowly down the aisle totally unnoticed. Joey held his cap in his hands.

Perspective

Jane Luecke

A sleek-skinned rain-rinsed
Bird peers
From wire top perch.

Below the water walk
Rubbers punch
And pattern and slide.

Awning drips plop and patter
Papers float
In rock cracked river.